

School-Based Decision Making

A KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INFORMATIONAL BROCHURE

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SBDM



Gene Wilhoit
Commissioner of Education

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GETTING INVOLVED

The Kentucky Department of Education is committed to providing a better education for each child. To succeed, school-based decision making and other KDE programs must have the support of citizens and parents. How can you help?

- Share your ideas and suggestions with teachers and administrators.
- Become an active member of the parent-teacher organization at your child's school.
- Volunteer to tutor or be a teacher's aide.
- Run for a seat on the council or volunteer to serve on a committee.
- Talk with your child about school and learning; do things at home to reinforce what is learned in school.

Information about school-based decision making in your district is available from the superintendent's office or from your child's principal. You may also check your school's website for SBDM meeting agendas, minutes, policies, and other SBDM-related information. For general information, phone the Kentucky Department of Education, 800-KDE-KERA, or logon to the Council Development Branch website at <http://www.kde.state.ky.us/olsi/leaders/sbdrm/default.asp>

Educators have known for a long time that children do better in school when parents are involved. Now, the Kentucky education statutes give parents an official role in their children's schools. The law makes parents full partners in the improvement of education.

The process is called School-Based Decision Making. As of July 1996, every school in Kentucky uses this decision making process. A few schools are exempt by statute. A school council (usually consisting of two parents, three teachers, and a principal) works together to develop policies and approve plans to help the children at that

school succeed. With School-Based Decision Making, the people who are closer to the school and students now make many policies and decisions that were previously made by state government or local school boards.

Not every parent can serve on a school council, but every council must have parents. The parent representatives shall be elected for terms set by the school council. The parent members shall be elected by the parents of students pre-registered to attend the school during the term of office in an election conducted by the parent-teacher organization of the school, or, if none exists, the largest organization formed for this purpose. Parents are not eligible to serve if they are employed by the school they serve, have a relative employed in the school they serve or at the district central office, if they are a board member or a board member's spouse. All parents and interested citizens may volunteer to serve on committees that support the council's work.

This shared decision-making process calls on parents and the community to help make public education everything it should be.

Welcome to the public education team! Read on to learn what School-Based Decision Making can mean to your child.

School-Based Decision Making – n. a decentralized, shared decision-making process in which the local school becomes the place where most of the policies and plans for schooling take place.

Q: How is school-based decision making different from the way schools are traditionally governed?

A: School districts used to set all policy that all schools had to follow. School-Based Decision Making removed many of those decisions from the

district and placed them in the hands of school councils. The theory suggests that local school people, in partnership with parents, can best decide how to educate their children.

Q: Does that mean every school is on its own?

A: Not quite. Some guidelines must exist to make sure all children in Kentucky have equal opportunities to a good education. The state has set general goals and measures how well each school, in its own way, meets these goals. The Kentucky Board of Education rewards schools that succeed, and helps those schools that do not. Local boards continue to play a vital role in developing district goals, budgets, improvement plans, and more.

Q: Who will serve on councils?

A: The Kentucky Revised Statute 160.345 sets council membership at six: the principal, three teachers (elected by teachers) and two parents (elected by parents), or a proportionate increase of these numbers. The law also says schools can design other council membership structures, but they must be approved by the Kentucky Board of Education. Schools with minority student populations of 8 percent or more must have minority representation.

Q: How do school councils function?

A: Every council will decide for itself how often it will meet, how it makes decisions, and how it communicates with the school community. In most cases, councils will depend on school committees to study issues.

Q: What authority and responsibilities do councils have?

A: The statute on School-Based Decision Making gives council responsibility and decision-making authority in the following areas:

1. Providing an environment that will enhance student achievement and help students meet goals set in statute
2. Setting the frequency of and agenda for their meetings
3. Abiding by Open Meetings Law by conducting meetings that are open to and convenient for the public
4. Developing a school budget with funds allocated to them through the local board by the district funding formula
5. Developing and implementing a school improvement plan
6. Deciding the number of persons to be employed in each job class at the school
7. Participating in decisions on staff vacancies (consultation rights when principal is filling vacancies)
8. Deciding on instructional materials to be purchased for the school including selection of textbooks
9. Determining student support services
10. Selecting the new principal when a vacancy occurs from a list of applicants recommended by the Superintendent

Approving school policy in the following areas:

11. Curriculum
12. Assignment of instructional and non-instructional staff time
13. Assignment of students to classes and programs in the school
14. School day and week schedules within board established guidelines.
15. Use of school space during the school day
16. Instructional practices
17. Discipline and classroom management techniques
18. Extracurricular programs, including staffing, and requirements for student participation
19. Procedures, consistent with local board policy, for determining alignment with state standards, use of technology, and program appraisal.

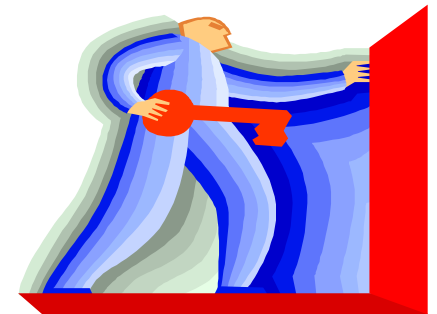
20. Procedures to assist the council with consultation
21. Policy on committees to facilitate parent participation

Q: What is the local school board's role in this decision-making process?

A: The law requires that local boards adopt policies to allow School-Based Decision Making to be implemented effectively. The board will also coordinate the allocation of funds to schools to provide for school-based budgeting, provide liability insurance for school council members, develop board policy that defines a process for the reimbursement of training expenses for council members, detail the form and function of councils' school improvement plans, develop district goals and long range plans, and other significant obligations.

Q: When will school-based decision making begin in my child's school?

A: As of 1996, all schools must have implemented SBDM unless they are exempt by statute or they have received an exemption due to meeting their schools test score goals.



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